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Campaign. (1897)



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## GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND HIS ILLINOIS CAMPAIGN.

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There is no name associated with the early history of the West more worthy of grateful remembrance by the people of the United States than that of George Rogers Clark, "the Washington of the West," as Reynolds called him,—“the Hannibal of the West” [1], as he is styled by John Randolph. By an almost bloodless contest, he gave force and validity to shadowy charter claims, and rendered an inestimable service in securing to this country the domain of an empire, out of which five great states have been carved. Conceiving and carrying to a successful conclusion against the most formidable obstacles, “one of the most daring and brilliant military enterprises recorded in the annals of individual or national hardihood” [2], he helped to make the Mississippi River the western boundary of the nation at the close of the Revolution, and paved the way for securing the vast territory to the West, the accession of which extended the nation’s boundaries from sea to sea. It was perhaps no very great stretch of the historian’s imagination to say that but for the work of this remarkable man, the magnificent country which now forms the greater part of the United States, “might at this hour be broken from us at the Alleghany Mountains’ summit, or the Ohio River’s shore.” [3]

When American independence had been won by force of arms, the chief obstacle to the securing of peace by the arts

[1] See chapter headed “The Hannibal of the West” in Dunn’s “Indiana.”

[2] Rives’ “Life and Times of Madison,” vol. I., p. 192.

[3] “Clark’s Campaign,” introduction.

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of diplomacy was the western boundary. The fisheries question was also a stumbling block, but that was of secondary importance, and was more easily adjusted. Many months of wearing negotiations were spent in an endeavor to arrive at a satisfactory settlement of the boundary question, and the fact that the United States held the disputed territory by right of conquest and settlement, as well as by charter claims, was the principal ground upon which the American commissioners relied to sustain their claim to the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes as the western boundaries of the new nation. It has been said that "while due credit should be given to Clark for his daring and successful undertaking, we must not forget that England's jealousy of Spain, and the shrewd diplomacy on the part of America's peace commissioners, were factors even more potent in winning the Northwest for the United States" [4], but the fact remains that but for Clark's campaign "the force of conquest, the moving etiquette of treaties of peace, would have been lost." [5] By the treaty of 1763 England had come into actual possession of the country between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi River, to which she had previously claimed an imaginary title [6], and Spain had obtained the vast territory west of the Mississippi, but twenty years later, when the United States wanted peace, the British title to the country was disputed and the King of Spain saw fit to lay claim to it on very slender grounds, perhaps with the connivance of both France and England. [7] France had undertaken to aid the United States to obtain its independence, and had made a treaty in which it had been expressly stipulated that peace should not be made with England until the inde-

[4] R. G. Thwaites, in Wither's "Border Warfare, p. 254, note.

[5] "Clark's Campaign," introduction.

[6] The early charters of the colonies had extended their boundaries from ocean to ocean, but England's domain did not extend beyond the Alleghany Mountains.

[7] In 1781 a detachment of Spaniards and Indians took possession of Fort St. Joseph, near the source of the Illinois. The Spanish minister called it a conquest and insisted that if the country did not belong to the King of Spain, it belonged to the Indians.—See "Clark's Campaign."



pendence of the United States in its entirety should be acknowledged, but when it came to making the treaty of peace, she showed no disposition to help the young nation to any territory that it had not wrested from Great Britain for itself, and it became a question of the utmost importance as to what had been British territory, and what was in the hands of the United States at the close of the war. M. Vergennes, the able French minister, said that "France did not desire to see the new Republic mistress of the entire continent" [8], and the secret diplomatic correspondence of the period of the peace negotiations shows that he was in sympathy with the desire of Spain and England to curtail the domain of the infant Republic, notwithstanding his professions of friendship. [9]

The King of Spain, who had acted for a while the part of mediator, and was reluctant to make war upon England, insisted that the United States should renounce its claims to the lands east of the Mississippi, as a condition precedent to his entering the alliance with France, and France, anxious for reasons of her own to give the Bourbon kingdom the balance of power in America, used her influence to get the American commissioners to yield the point. Interests too great were at stake, however, and they declined at the risk of a breach with France. The Catholic king's claim that England had forfeited her title [10] to the disputed territory, that it did not belong to the Americans, but to him or to the Indians, was not tenable, and it was the only ground upon which the demand of the United States could be refused. There was no doubt that the territory had belonged to England and had been won from her in the name of Virginia. The State of Virginia had asserted her claim to the territory by virtue of her chartered

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[8] See "Diplomatic Correspondence," vol. 1.

[9] See "Diplomatic Correspondence," Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History," "Adams' Writings," "Franklin's Works," "Magazine of Western History," etc., etc.

[10] "Narrative and Critical History," vol. vii., p. 118.

limits, and by "the right of conquest" [11], and her Assembly had, on November 5th, 1779, adopted resolutions instructing her delegates in Congress "in the pending negotiations with Spain to use their utmost endeavors to obtain an express stipulation in favor of the United States for the free navigation of the River Mississippi to the sea," etc. At the previous session the Legislature had passed an act incorporating into her government the whole country between the Ohio and the Mississippi, under the name of the County of Illinois, and provision had been made for its protection by reinforcements to Clark's army. Virginia had later granted 150,000 acres to Clark and his officers, and had reserved lands for other soldiers and officers, while Congress in 1780, recognizing the title of the different states to their western lands, had recommended that they cede them to the United States. These transactions had taken place before the signing of the preliminary articles of peace and all the facts were known to the peace commissioners of the interested nations. Congress, too, when by its act of March, 1779, it instructed its commissioner to insist upon the Mississippi River for the western boundary, had held that the American people had succeeded to the English rights. [12] The design of Spain, abetted by France, had been "to coop us up within the Alleghany Mountains," as Dr. Franklin expressed it in 1782, and it has been said that the chief reason why the design failed was that "George Rogers Clark had conquered the country, and Virginia was in undisputed possession of it at the close of hostilities." Judge Burnet says in his interesting "Notes on the Early Settlement of the North-West Territory:" "That fact [the capture of the British forts] was confirmed and admitted, and was the chief ground upon which the British commissioners reluctantly abandoned their claims." In the light of more recent historical knowledge, it

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[11] Rives' "Madison," vol. i., p. 206.

[12] "Narrative and Critical History," vol. vii., p. 90.



must be admitted that those statements need some modification. As has been said, the whole credit for the winning of this large portion of the West can not be given to Clark, and yet the fact remains beyond dispute that his achievements played a part, without which the diplomacy of our ambassadors abroad might have been unavailing. It detracts somewhat from Clark's glory that he did not, himself, take into account the important bearing his undertaking would have upon the boundary question; and it can hardly be said that he was actuated by any such high patriotic motive as the extension of the domain of his mother country. Clark probably had another end in view, but Thomas Jefferson saw the importance of the successful outcome of the expedition, as is shown by a letter which he wrote to Clark before the expedition started, in which he said: "Much solicitude will be felt for the result of your expedition to the Wabash; it will, at least, delay their expedition to the frontier, and if successful, have an important bearing ultimately in establishing our North-western boundary." [13]

#### GEORGE ROGERS CLARK'S EARLY LIFE.

The limits of this paper will not permit an extended account of the disturbed condition of things prevailing in the Western country shortly before the breaking out of the revolution, nor an inquiry into the causes which made the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley the theater of a long and bloody border war. It will suffice to say that the encroachment of the American settlers upon their hunting grounds had gained for the colonists the hatred of the Indians who fought them first on their own account, and then broke a short-lived peace.

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[13] Dr. Hinsdale in his work on "The Old Northwest" takes the view that Clark's conquest, separate and apart from the colonial titles, would not have secured the great West to the United States, but in another place he remarks that the American commissioners at Paris in 1782 could plead *uti possidetis* in reference to much of the country beyond the Ohio because the flag of the Republic raised over it by George Rogers Clark had never been lowered.

to fight them at British instigation, until George Rogers Clark whipped them into subjugation. Much has been written about the Illinois campaign and its results, but the life of the man who conceived and executed it remains in comparative obscurity. Of his early years almost nothing is known. He was born near Monticello, in Albermarle County, Virginia, of British ancestry, on November 19th, 1752, and at the age of sixteen had begun life as a surveyor. Four years later he was practicing his profession on the upper Ohio, and had taken up a claim at the mouth of Fish Creek. He seems to have continued to work on the upper Ohio for a couple of years, and in April, 1774, was one of a party of eighty or ninety Virginians who gathered at the Little Kanawha River with the intention of making a settlement in Kentucky, the tide of emigration being that way at the time. Rumors of Indian outbreaks diverted them from their purpose, and made them participants in the events which led up to the Dunmore war. Clark was a member of a company which started out to attack the camp of Logan, the famous chief, but relented when it had gone five miles on its journey, and it was his testimony which years afterwards cleared Capt. Cresap from the charge of having murdered Logan's family. When activities began in earnest against the Indians, Clark joined Dunmore's army and was made captain of a company, though he was then only twenty-one years of age. The part which he took in this war gave him a knowledge of Indian fighting, which, joined with his experience as a frontiersman, fitted him for the greater enterprise in which he was to be the moving spirit. His services in the war had evidently been valuable, for at its close he was offered a commission in the English service, but evidently foreseeing the clash that was to come, and being heartily in sympathy with the colonists as against the mother country, he declined the commission.

Then, as now, the West was regarded as the field of action for young men, and Clark had for some time thought of cast-

ing his lot in the country beyond the Alleghany Mountains. It does not appear that he went west with any political ambition, but on the contrary that he sought only a fortune. His letters of that period are full of talk about the land that was to be obtained in the far country, and there is no ground for supposing that he left Virginia with any other intent than that of securing an estate for himself, and making money by the speculation which is always incident to a new and developing country. In the spring of 1775 he carried out the intent, frustrated by the Indian outbreak the year before, of visiting the Kentucky country, which had been explored by Daniel Boone and others a few years previous. He remained until the fall of the year, engaging in surveying, and soon became very popular with the pioneers, who recognized in the young adventurer the qualities of a leader. He thought of making Kentucky his permanent home, and busied himself during his stay investigating the condition of the settlement. He found that great dissatisfaction prevailed, and saw that something had got to be done to bring about a better feeling or the settlement would languish and perhaps die. Early in the year Colonel Richard Henderson & Company had purchased from the Cherokee Indians a large tract in the territory that now comprises Kentucky. [14] There had been a considerable tide of emigration, and the proprietors had soon begun to raise the price of their lands, which had caused complaints. Some of the leaders were trying to persuade the people to pay no attention to the company [15], and trouble was brewing. Clark, no doubt, saw that the disturbed condition of things afforded an opportunity for a bold and venturesome spirit like himself to become a leader, an opportunity which he would be the last to miss. In the fall he returned to Virginia, and while there matured his plans for bettering the conditions of Ken-

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[14] Butler's "Kentucky."

[15] "Clark's Memoirs" in Dillon's "Indiana."

tucky. "While in Virginia," he says in his "Memoirs," "I found there were various opinions respecting Henderson & Company's claim. Many thought it was good; others doubted whether or not Virginia could, with propriety, have any pretensions to the country. This was what I wanted to know. I immediately fixed on my plan, viz: That of assembling the people—getting them to elect deputies, and sending them to treat with the Assembly of Virginia respecting the condition of the country. If valuable conditions were procured, we could declare ourselves citizens of the state; otherwise, we might establish an independent government; and, by giving away a great part of the lands, and disposing of the remainder, we would not only gain great numbers of inhabitants, but in a good measure protect them."

Early in the summer of 1776, Clark returned to Kentucky to carry out his plan. He induced the people to convene at Harrodstown and the meeting was held on June 6th. He did not outline his plan in advance, simply stating that "something would be proposed to the people that very much concerned their interest." [16] "The reason I had for not publishing what I wished to be done," he says in his "Memoirs," "was that the people should not get into parties on the subject; and as every one would wish to know what was to be done, there would be a more general meeting." Unfortunately for the detail of his plans, he was late, and before he arrived the meeting had elected him and Gabriel Jones as delegates to the Virginia Assembly, with petition praying for the establishment of a new county, instead of electing them as "deputies under the authority of the people," as he had wished [17], and he could not prevail upon them to change the principle. Clark and Jones immediately set out on their long journey through the trackless wilderness to Williamsburg, where the Virginia

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[16] "Clark's Memoirs."

[17] "Clark's Memoirs."

Assembly was sitting. They hoped to get there before the session ended, but, after enduring the greatest hardships and suffering, they arrived in Virginia too late. There was nothing to do but to wait until the fall session for a hearing, and Clark determined to attempt in the interim to get some powder for the Kentuckians, who needed it to defend themselves against the Indians. Jones went to Holston to join the forces about to set out against the Cherokees, who had begun hostilities, and Clark proceeded to Williamsburg alone. Patrick Henry, who was then governor of Virginia, was lying sick at his seat in Hanover, and Clark visited him there. Henry was favorably impressed with Clark, and gave him a letter to the Council recommending the granting of his request for five hundred pounds of powder. The Council, however, took a very different view of the matter, and at first could not be persuaded to do more than to let him have the powder as a loan for which he was to be personally responsible in the event that the Assembly declined to receive the Kentuckians as citizens. Clark, who probably secretly favored the plan of an independent state, declined the offer, writing to the Council that "if a country was not worth protecting, it was not worth claiming." [18] "I resolved," he said, "to return the order I had received [issued to the keeper of the magazine] and repair at once to Kentucky, knowing that the people would readily fall into my first plan—as what had passed had almost reduced it to a certainty of success." The letter brought the Council to time; Clark was recalled, an order, dated August 23rd, 1776, was issued for conveying the powder to Pittsburg, there to await Clark's orders; and a beginning was made in a series of events which was to give Virginia, and ultimately the United States, the magnificent country west of the Alleghanies. At the fall session Clark and Jones appeared before the Assembly, and, in spite of the opposition of Colonel Richard Henderson

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[18] "Clark's Memoirs."



and Colonel Arthur Campbell, secured the passage of an act creating the County of Kentucky. It was dated December 7th, 1776, and it gave a political existence to what is now the State of Kentucky.

It does not appear that up to this time Clark had had any idea of reducing the British posts. His sole object had apparently been to give the country of Kentucky a political existence, and it is a reasonable conclusion that what he wanted was an independent state in which he might be the leading spirit, notwithstanding that in one place in his "Memoirs" he speaks of "being a little prejudiced in favor of his mother country" [19], which made him willing to meet the Virginia Council half way in the matter of getting a supply of powder. His real intent, it seems to me, is apparent from his declaration that "if *valuable* conditions were procured we [the people of Kentucky] could declare ourselves citizens of the state; *otherwise we could establish an independent government*" [20]; from his chagrin at the action of the Harrodsburg meeting in petitioning the Virginia Assembly to accept them as citizens, instead of electing deputies to treat with the Virginia government in the name of a people already organized; and by his willingness to break off the negotiations with the Virginia Council for powder, and to return to Kentucky, "knowing that the people would readily fall into his first plan." [21] It is perhaps safe to say that until some years after the date of Clark's first visit to Kentucky the opinion was general that the country beyond the mountains would have a separate government, and Clark only sought to bring about what was generally expected.

Word had been sent to Kentucky that powder was to be obtained at Pittsburg, but the letter never arrived, and Clark and Jones, hearing that the ammunition was still undelivered,

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[19] Dillon's "Indiana."

[20] Dillon's "Indiana."

[21] "Memoirs."



determined to return to Kentucky by way of the Ohio River and take it with them. Pittsburg was surrounded at the time with hostile Indians, which made a guard necessary for the safe transportation of the powder. They embarked with seven boatmen, and though hotly pursued by Indians, managed to reach the mouth of Limestone Creek, where they secreted the powder, and Clark returned to Harrodsburg. Jones joined a party, commanded by Colonel Todd, and lost his life in an attempt to return for the powder [22], but Clark afterwards secured a convoy, and conveyed it safely to Harrodsburg, where it was badly needed for protection against the Indians who were making a great deal of trouble. The condition of the country was infinitely worse in 1777 than it was when Clark had left the summer before, and it was while he was actively engaged in defending Harrodsburg from the assaults of the Indians that he conceived the plan of reducing the British forts, and subduing the Indians by removing the cause which incited them to hostilities. Kentucky was experiencing the horrors of Indian warfare, and scarcely a day passed without bloodshed. Clark found time, while fighting the Indians, to keep a journal, the laconic entries of which furnish a vivid picture of the hand-to-hand combat that was being waged. Day after day, from March to September, he chronicled the bloody deeds of their fierce assailants, who gave them no rest, night or day. In the midst of this direful chronology is this brief passage, showing the light-hearted character of the brave frontiersman: "July 9.—Lieutenant Linn married; *great merriment.*"

At this time the British held three forts which had been ceded to them by France at the close of the French and Indian war in 1765—Detroit, on the Great Lakes; Kaskaskia, on the right bank of the Kaskaskia River, seven miles above its junction with the Mississippi; and St. Vincent's, now Vincennes,

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[22] Perkins' "Western Annals," p. 161.

on the Wabash, one hundred and fifty miles above its mouth. From these forts the Indians were sent out, armed and equipped, to prey upon the settlements along the western border, incited to murder by a reward for scalps. No reward was offered for prisoners, and consequently no mercy was shown to the poor settler who fell into their hands. Without the aid of the British, the Indians could not have held out long against the valiant men who had undertaken the defense of the settlements. The downfall of the forts, therefore, meant a speedy end to the Indian troubles, if nothing more. Each of these forts—which were strong stockades with block houses at the corners—was surrounded by a town inhabited mostly by French *habitants*, an easy-going, light-hearted, picturesque people, who hunted or trapped or farmed for a living, and filled their idle hours with mirth and music, caring little about who governed them so long as they were not interfered with. They gave a careless obedience to the English, but they had no very great love for them, and naturally would have sympathized with the Americans but for the misrepresentations of the British, who poured into their ears frightful tales of the cruelty and ferocity of the Long Knives, as the colonists were called. In spite of those stories, many of them had a friendly feeling for the settlers, as was later clearly shown by their readiness to aid in the overthrow of their British masters when the forts were attacked. Their friendship contributed not a little to the success of the Illinois campaign.

#### THE ILLINOIS CAMPAIGN.

Clark understood the whole situation perfectly, and, with the grasp of a great military genius, saw that the quickest and surest way to obtain peace was to carry the war into the enemy's country. Without consulting anybody, or taking anybody into his confidence, he sent two young hunters to the British posts in the capacity of spies, and from them learned

that they were not strongly garrisoned, though they were very active. They reported, what Clark suspected, that, despite the misrepresentations of the British regarding the Americans, there were many among the inhabitants of the towns who were in sympathy with the colonists and would aid them. Clark knew that the British hope of uniting the western tribes in an alliance that would destroy the frontier was but half realized, that some of the tribes were divided in feeling, and that if the British in the Northwest could be expelled, the Indians could soon be awed into quiet. Having his plans fully matured, he left Harrodsburg on October 1st to make the long journey to Virginia alone, fearing not the dangers of the wilderness. He arrived in Williamsburg on November 5th, and, while busying himself settling the accounts of the Kentucky militia, carefully noted everything that indicated the disposition of those in power. Burgoyne having surrendered while he was on his way to the capitol, "and things seeming to wear a pleasant aspect," as he says in his "Memoirs," on December 10th he laid his scheme before Governor Henry. He also consulted George Mason, George Wythe and Thomas Jefferson, but he was careful not to divulge his plans to others, lest they should become generally known and be defeated by reports reaching the posts he intended to attack. Those to whom he communicated his design entered into the spirit of it heartily. They saw in it a means of diverting the savage attack upon the western frontier that had already fallen upon the frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania, and they lent all their influence to securing for Clark the aid which he needed. Under the pretext that supplies were needed for the defense of Kentucky, they secured the necessary legislation, £1,200 in the depreciated currency of the state being voted to him to cover his expenses. Governor Henry made him a colonel, and in January he departed with two sets of instructions, one public, the other private. The first authorized him to enlist seven

companies of men "in any county of the commonwealth," who were to proceed with him to Kentucky, there to obey such orders and directions as he should give them. The second directed him to take his force and "attack the British post at Kaskasky," the Governor earnestly desiring him to "show humanity to such British subjects and other persons" as fell into his hands. If the white inhabitants of the post gave evidence of their attachment to the state by taking the test prescribed by law, their persons and property were to be duly secured, but if they would not accede to those reasonable demands, "they must feel the Miseries of War, under the direction of that Humanity that had hitherto distinguished Americans," etc. [23]

Proceeding to Pittsburg, Clark began the work of raising his companies, but owing to a dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania, and the fact that there was reluctance to send men to Kentucky when they were wanted nearer home, he had great difficulty in securing recruits. He finally raised three companies, and, hearing that four companies had been raised by the officers whom he had sent to Kentucky for the purpose, started down the river with his three companies of fifty men each, taking supplies at Pittsburg and Wheeling. He proceeded to Corn Island, at the falls of the Ohio, opposite the point where the city of Louisville now stands, to await the arrival of the Kentucky troupes. Only one of the Kentucky companies appeared, and when Clark revealed the true object of the expedition many of his men deserted. However, enough remained to make four companies, and on June 24th, 1778, the expedition started, leaving a few men to guard the island. On that day the sun was in eclipse, and they shot the falls at the moment when it became total,—a circumstance which, Clark says, "caused various conjectures among the superstitious." A less resolute man, starting upon so great an undertaking

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[23] Appendix to "Clark's Campaign."



with so small an army [24], might have seen in it an augury of defeat; but Clark was an army in himself, and he had news of the alliance between France and the United States, which he knew would help him with the French settlers at Kaskaskia, so he proceeded, not at all disturbed by the phenomenon that so alarmed some of his soldiers.

It was Clark's original intention to proceed against Vincennes from Corn Island, but, being informed that the post was held by a strong garrison, he determined to strike Kaskaskia first. Kaskaskia at that time consisted of a fort and a town [25] inhabited almost entirely by Frenchmen. If he could overcome the prejudices aroused by the British, Clark felt that he could gain the support of the French residents, and he hoped to increase his strength sufficiently to make the conquest of the more powerful Vincennes easy. Deliberating upon his plans as he proceeded, he urged his men to the greatest efforts. The oars were double-manned and plied night and day. Their progress was rapid, and on June 28th they reached an island at the mouth of the Tennessee. As the river below the Illinois towns was being watched by spies, Clark had determined to make a portion of the journey overland, and he made a landing on the island to prepare for the march. Here their boats brought in a party of hunters from whom Clark obtained some valuable information concerning the posts he was about to attack. They informed Clark that the French had a "horrid idea of the barbarity of the Rebels, especially the Virginians," and the astute commander saw in this piece of news a circumstance that could be turned to advantage. "I was determined," he says in his Memoirs, "to improve upon this if I was fortunate enough to get them into

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[24] Dunn places the number at 153. Governor Henry in a letter speaks of 170 or 180, and Major Fowman also says 170 or 180, but both had in mind the number gathered at Corn Island, and as Clark had left a squad there, his army probably did not exceed 153.

[25] The number of houses is variously estimated at from 80 to 250. See Perkins' "Annals," pp. 176-178, and "Magazine of Western History," Vol. II., p. 138.

my possession; as I conceived the greater the shock I could give them at first, the more sensibly would they feel my lenity, and become more valuable friends."

Everything being in readiness, the boats were concealed in a small creek nine miles below the island and one mile above old Fort Massac, and without a cannon, or means of transporting supplies, the little army started on its march of more than one hundred miles over the prairies. After getting lost, suffering from hunger and thirst, and enduring the other hardships of such a march, they arrived within three miles of Kaskaskia on the afternoon of July 4th. Waiting until dark, they procured boats, crossed the river, and entered the town, to find that the people, who had been under arms in expectation of an attack, had not been aware of their approach. Dividing his army, Clark ordered one division to surround the town, and with the other he broke into the fort [26] and captured M. Rochblave, who was in command. In fifteen minutes every avenue of escape from the town was guarded. It was of the utmost importance that nobody should get away to warn Vincennes, and, to prevent an attempt, the soldiers, who could speak French, were sent through the town warning the people that every person appearing on the streets would be shot down, and that anybody taken in an attempt to escape would be put to death. To make an impression upon the minds of the inhabitants, the soldiers kept up a frightful uproar in all parts of the town, and the poor people, thinking they had fallen into the hands of men worse than savages, gave themselves up for lost. In the morning M. Gibault, the priest of the village, and five or six aged citizens waited on Clark, and asked that before the people were separated forever they be allowed to assemble in the church and hold a farewell service, a request which, of

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[26] A great historical painting in the capitol at Springfield, Ill., shows the fort on the east side of the river, following Butler's statement in his history of Kentucky, but it is now known that the old fort on the east side was burned in 1766, and the fort that Clark took was in the town. See "Narrative and Critical History," vol. vii., pp. 719-722.



course, Clark granted readily, the time for leniency having come. After the service, which was attended by almost every inhabitant of the town, a deputation again waited upon Clark, and, expressing a willingness to sacrifice their property, asked that their families might not be broken up, and that they be given food upon which to sustain themselves. This was Clark's opportunity, and he embraced it. "Do you take us for savages?" he asked, in feigned surprise. "My countrymen disdain to make war on women and children. It was to prevent the horrors of Indian butchery upon our wives and children that we have taken up arms and appear in this stronghold of British and Indian barbarity, and not the despicable prospect of plunder." He told them of the alliance between France and the United States, assured them of personal and religious liberty if they espoused the American cause, and, to show his sincerity, informed them that they were "at liberty to conduct themselves as usual, without the least apprehension." The joy of the people knew no bounds. They decorated their streets, sang songs and manifested their happiness in different ways. They took the oath of allegiance, and raised a company of volunteers to accompany Captain Bowman to Cahokia, a French settlement a few miles below St. Louis, which surrendered without a blow. Clark, thinking all the time of Vincennes, took pains not to let the people know the size of his force. He would not allow them to enter the fort, which they supposed was full of soldiers. He spoke of a big force at the falls of the Ohio, and pretended that he could summon any number of men from Kentucky. When he announced that he was going to march on Vincennes, the people evinced a desire to save their friends at that post. Father Gibault thought it would not be necessary to send troops there, and he volunteered to go with Dr. Lafonte to negotiate a capitulation. Clark assented to the proposal, and, with a caution that he never failed to exhibit, sent a spy

in their retinue. Vincennes was in Father Gibault's [27] spiritual jurisdiction, and after he had explained the matter he did not have much difficulty in inducing the citizens to surrender and become American citizens. The few British soldiers left there by Governor Abbott, who had gone to Detroit on business, could not prevent the action, and they withdrew to follow their chief. "The people went to the village church in a body, and took the oath of allegiance; an officer was elected, the fort garrisoned, and the American flag was raised for the first time on Indiana soil." [28] Clark in less than one month had secured possession of every post in the Illinois country without a battle or the loss of a single life.

The object of the expedition was accomplished, but a new problem presented itself. How was the country so easily acquired to be held against the forces that the British could at any time send against it? His force was inadequate, and it threatened to grow smaller. The term for which the men had enlisted had expired, and he had no authority to extend it. Moreover, the Virginia currency in his possession would buy nothing in the Illinois country. Clark, however, was not a man to be stopped by ordinary obstacles. Authority or no authority, the country had to be held, and he was the man to hold it. He met this, as he met every other emergency, with a sagacity and self-reliance that marked him as a great man. He induced about one hundred of the men to reënlist for eight months, under promise of liberal pay. The others he sent home, and had them take Rochblave a prisoner to Williamsburg, besides carrying dispatches to the Virginia government. Then he put Captain Bowman in charge of Cahokia and Captain Helm in command of Vincennes, and turned his attention to the Indians. Through Captain Helm, whom he

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[27] Judge Law, in his "Colonial History of Vincennes," says of Gibault: "To whom, next to Clark and Vigo, the United States is indebted for the accession of the states comprised in what was the original Northwest Territory, more than any other man."

[28] Dunn's "Indiana."

had made superintendent of Indian affairs on the Wabash, he negotiated a treaty with the Piankeshaws, and soon all the tribes in the vicinity were flocking in to make peace with the great white warrior. He held a council with the Indians at Cahokia, and, with characteristic coolness, treated them with contempt until he had awed them, and then, with apparent reluctance, granted a peace that he desired above all things. His negotiations with the Indians lasted five weeks, and they had an influence upon all the tribes around the great lakes.

Meanwhile Governor Hamilton at Detroit had heard of the state of affairs in the Illinois country. In the fall he started out with a force of regulars, Canadian volunteers and Indians [29] to recapture the posts. On December 15th he took Vincennes, which the inhabitants of the town made no attempt to defend. Captain Helm and one soldier, Moses Henry, held the fort. When the British appeared they found a loaded cannon pointing at them through the open gate. Helm, standing beside it with a lighted match, commanded the British to halt. Hamilton called upon the fort to surrender. Helm exclaimed with an oath, "No man shall enter until I know the terms." Hamilton answered, "You shall have the honors of war," and was astonished to see the captain and one man walk out! [30] Thinking it too late to operate against the rest of the country, Hamilton sent out his Indians to harass the Americans and prevent troops joining them by way of the Ohio River, and then sat down to pass the winter in Vincennes.

#### CLARK'S CAPTURE OF VINCENNES.

On the strength of the dispatches announcing the reduction of the British posts, the Virginia Assembly had in October erected the country beyond the Ohio into the County of Illinois,

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[29] Clark ("Campaign," p. 52) says there were 800 men. Dillon makes the number 480.

[30] This anecdote is related in Perkins' "Annals" and Butler's "Kentucky."

but the county and Clark were now in a fair way to pass into the hands of the British. Early in January a scouting party sent out by Hamilton almost succeeded in capturing Clark while he was on his way from Cahokia. Supposing that the party was the advance guard of Hamilton's army, Clark called Captain Bowman from Cahokia and made preparations for defending Kaskaskia. In the midst of the preparations Colonel Francis Vigo, a Spanish merchant, arrived from Vincennes, and gave Clark information which changed his mind, and gave a new direction to his energies. Judge Law says that Vigo was sent to Vincennes by Clark in the capacity of a spy, that he was captured by Indians on his way and taken before Hamilton, and got off with great difficulty, in which statement most of the historians have followed him, but Clark nowhere mentions that fact, and speaks of Vigo's having been at the fort when it was taken. [31] Neither does Vigo mention the fact in his memorial to Congress [32] for the payment of a claim growing out of advances made to Clark, though he speaks of having given Clark the information which enabled him to surprise Hamilton, and Major Bauman says in his *Journal* that Vigo was there on "his lawful business." [33] Vigo was an Indian trader, with headquarters at St. Louis, who took a great interest in Clark, and by advancing money on his drafts enabled him to get supplies when he must otherwise have failed. [34] From Vigo Clark learned that Hamilton had sent away his Indians and most of his soldiers, retaining only a force of eighty men at the fort, and did not contemplate an attack upon Kaskaskia until spring. Though it was in the dead of winter, and the expedition must be attended with great hardships and danger, the daring leader determined to

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[31] "Clark's Campaign," p. 63.

[32] "House Report, No. 117," 33rd Congress, first session, etc.

[33] "*Journal*."

[34] For history of Vigo's claim, see "*Magazine of Western History*," January, 1885, p. 230.

attack Vincennes and beard the British lion in his den. Without the loss of an hour, he set about preparing for the expedition that was to go down in history as one of the most brilliant in the annals of American warfare. He received his first definite information concerning Hamilton's movements on January 29th, and on February 4th he had a big "battoe," mounted with two four-pounders and four large swivel guns, and filled with provisions, ready to go down the river and aid in the attack. She was named *The Willing*, and Clark says that she "was much admired by the inhabitants, as no such thing had been seen in the country before." Lieutenant Rogers was placed in command of *The Willing*, which had a crew of forty-six men. He had instructions to force his way up the Wabash as far as the mouth of White River, there to secrete himself until he received further orders. On the next day Clark, with one hundred and seventy men, started on his overland march, "after receiving a lecture and absolution from the priest." They crossed the Kaskaskia River, marched three miles, and then encamped. What the reckless commander may have thought as he lay in camp can only be conjectured, but the mind of the bravest man might well have been filled with dismay at the thought of the difficulties ahead of him. There was a painful march of two hundred miles [35] to be made over a country that was well nigh impassable. There had been heavy rains, and the rivers, choked with floating ice, had overflowed their banks and covered the prairies, converting portions of the plains into veritable lakes. Where there was no water there was mud, deep as only Illinois mud can be. The weather was comparatively mild at the time, but it was at a season of the year when intense cold might be expected at any moment. Altogether, the prospect was most disheartening, but if the fearless captain felt any dismay he has left no record of it.

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[35] The distance actually marched is variously estimated from 160 to 250 miles.



Captain, afterwards Major, Bowman, who accompanied the expedition, kept a journal, the terse entries of which tell the sufferings endured on that terrible march, better than anything Clark wrote. Clark dwells upon the means employed to accomplish his ends, but passes lightly over the suffering of his men. [36] On the 7th the expedition set out again. In six days the Little Wabash was reached. The chief difficulty, Clark says, had been to keep up the spirits of his men. This he did by encouraging them to shoot game and hold nightly entertainments in the shape of games and feasts. The Little Wabash presented the greatest obstacle they had yet encountered. The river and one of its affluents had united their floods and formed a lake from three to five miles wide. Clark confesses that he viewed this sheet of water with distrust, but he sat about building a raft, and pretended that the crossing would be nothing more than a diversion. The "diversion" occupied them for three days, and the men had to wade through water four feet deep to reach the opposite bank, after the ammunition had been ferried across. The next day their provisions commenced to run short, and hunger began to aggravate their sufferings. On the 17th they reached the Embarrass River, and found it impassable. Until 8 o'clock at night they marched up and down the river in search of a dry spot. Finally, in the words of Major Bowman, "we found the water falling from a small spot of ground. Staid there the remainder of the night. Drizzly and dark weather." [37] Four men had been sent out to cross the river and steal some boats from a plantation to ferry the army across the Wabash, but the attempt failed. On the 18th, to continue with Major Bowman's narrative, "at daybreak heard Governor Hamilton's

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[36] Clark in his letter to George Mason says: "If I was sensible that you would let no person see this relation, I would give you a detail of our sufferings for four days in crossing these waters, and the manner it was done, as I am sure you would credit it; but it is too incredible for any person to believe, except those that are as well acquainted with me as you are, or had experience something similar to it."—"Campaign," p. 66.

[37] Appendix to "Clark's Campaign," p. 102.



morning gun. Set off and marched down the river—saw some fine land. About 2 o'clock came to the banks of the Wabash: made rafts for four men to cross and go up to town and steal boats; but they spent the day and night in the water to no purpose; for there was not one foot of dry land to be found." The next day a canoe was built, and Captain McCarty set out with three men to make another attempt to steal boats. He had not gone far before he discovered four large fires, which seemed to be the fires of Indians and whites, and he returned. Clark then dispatched two men in the canoe to go after *The Willing*, with orders to have her proceed without rest to the rescue of his starving company. It was their last hope, Major Bowman says, and many of the men were downcast. He closes his entry for that day: "No provisions now for two days. Hard fortune!" It was hard fortune indeed.

On the 20th the men began to despair, and for the first time the French volunteers talked of returning, but Clark laughed away their fears, and told them he would be glad if they would go out and kill some deer. They shot one, "which," says the hungry Major, "was brought into camp very acceptably." To keep them occupied, Clark set the men to work building canoes, and during the day a party of hunters told them of two canoes that were floating in the river, one of which was captured. They also told them that the British had not yet discovered their presence. At daybreak on the following morning the work of ferrying the men across the river began. They were landed on a small hill, and, hoping to reach town that night, waded through water up to their necks to a second hill three miles away. Here they were surrounded by water. The nearest spot of dry land was a small elevation called the Sugar Camp, nearly a league away. To transport the men there in boats would take a day and night, which was a long time to starving men. Wading being the only way out of the difficulty, Clark assumed an air of bravado, blackened his face

with powder, gave a warwhoop and plunged into the water, with his officers at his heels. "The party gazed," he says in his *Memoirs*, "and fell in one after another, without saying a word, like a flock of sheep. I ordered those near me to begin a favorite song of theirs; it soon passed through the line, and the whole went on cheerfully." [38] The water was up to their necks, but they reached Sugar Camp in safety. That day the men had nothing to eat, and that night the weather turned so cold that their clothing froze to them, and ice half an inch thick formed on the water. No tidings had been received from The Willing. "Heard the evening and morning guns from the fort," says Major Bowman. "No provisions yet. Lord help us!"

The morning broke bright and clear. Before the starving and half frozen band of heroes lay Horseshoe Plain, covered for four miles with icy water breast deep, through which they must wade to reach Vincennes. Clark addressed his men, encouraging them to make a last effort. Within sight was their goal; they had but to reach the wood beyond the plain, and their hardships would be over. Without waiting for a reply he dashed into the water, breaking the ice as he went. The men answered with a hurrah and followed. When a few had entered he sent Major Bowman back with a detachment to put to death any man who refused to march. The order was greeted with another shout, and the men rushed after their dauntless leader. Strong as he was, Clark found himself failing before he reached the middle of the plain, and as there were no trees or bushes for the men to cling to, he began to fear that many would drown. He directed the canoes to hurry back and forth, picking up the men who were weak and numb with cold. At the same time he ordered some of the stronger men forward with instructions to send back word that the water was getting shallower, and when they got to the wood to cry out

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[38] Dillon's "Indiana," p. 143.

“land!” The stratagem had the desired effect; the strong helped the weak, and they renewed their struggles to reach the wood. There the water was no shallower, but the exhausted men could cling to the trees or float upon logs until they were picked up by the canoes. The strongest men reached the shore almost exhausted. “Many,” says Clark, “would reach the shore and fall with their bodies half in the water, not being able to support themselves without it.” The day had grown warm, and, under the influence of the sunshine and the fires built by those who reached the shore first, the men soon revived. Fortune began to smile upon them. Their boats captured an Indian canoe in which some squaws and children were taking provisions to town. In it they found a quarter of a buffalo, some corn, tallow and kettles. Broth was made and served to the famished soldiers. The spirits of the party rose rapidly, and the past hardships became matters of jest. In the afternoon they crossed a lake in their canoes, marched a short distance, and rested in a belt of timber with Vincennes in full view. From a hunter who was taken prisoner, it was learned that the town was still in ignorance of the approach of the Americans and that it was full of Indians.

The situation in which the little army now found itself was critical in the extreme. A few hours would determine its fate, and it was victory or death. Retreat was out of the question. Behind them lay miles of flood, which, in their exhausted and half-famished condition, they could not re-pass. In front of them was a town filled with Indians and British soldiers. Capture meant torture at the hands of the savages. Their only hope was in the success of a bold play to secure possession of the town. The Willing had not arrived, and no assistance could be counted upon from that direction. As they were sure to be discovered before night, Clark determined to begin operations at once. He knew that the inhabitants of the town were favorable to the Americans, or at least lukewarm in

their attachment to the British, and he knew also that Chief Tobac, with whom a treaty had been made some time before, was on hand, and had openly avowed his friendship for the Big Knives. Encouraged by those circumstances to hope for assistance from the town, he began his operations by sending the following proclamation to the inhabitants, using his prisoner for a herald:

*To the Inhabitants of Post Vincennes:*

Gentlemen—Being now within two miles of your village, with my army, determined to take your fort this night, and not being willing to surprise you, I take this method to request such of you as are true citizens, and willing to enjoy the liberty I bring you, to remain still in your houses; and those, if any there be, that are friends of the king, will instantly repair to the fort and join the hair-buyer [39] general, and fight like men. And if any such as do not go to the fort shall be discovered afterward, they may depend on severe punishment. On the contrary, those who are true friends of liberty may depend on being well treated; and I once more request them to keep out of the streets. For every one I find in arms on my arrival I shall treat him as an enemy. [40]

[Signed]

G. R. CLARK.

Clark was a little disturbed by the fact that nothing had been heard from the fort, not so much as a drum beat. He feared that his information had not been reliable; that the enemy knew of his presence and was expecting him. But the suspicion did not deter him from acting. With marvelous cunning, he took advantage of favorable circumstances to deceive the people as to the strength of his army, and so timed his manoeuvres that the deception could not be discovered until it was too late for the discovery to have any effect upon the inhabitants. The ground around Vincennes was uneven,

[39] Alluding to Governor Hamilton's reward for scalps and not for prisoners. After Hamilton had been taken prisoner and sent to Virginia, where he was placed in irons and detained long after other prisoners had been paroled, the council investigated the charge against him and reported that he had offered such rewards, and had been guilty of great cruelty. See "Jefferson's Writings," vol. 1., pp. 226-8. The matter is treated at length in the "Narrative and Critical History," vol. vi., pp. 681-684.

[40] "Major Bowman's Journal."



the low hills running obliquely toward the town. The low ground was covered with water, but water was no obstacle to Clark's men. Setting out just before sunset, he marched and countermarched his army on the lowlands in such a manner that to the crowds watching the approach there appeared to be a long and unbroken column advancing. His men had captured some mounted hunters, and the officers, on the prisoners' horses, trotted back and forth as though directing the movements of a great body of men. The colors of the troops had been fastened upon long poles, and they were allowed to show a long distance apart, over the tops of the low slopes, to make it appear as though company after company was coming up. In that manner they moved along until it became dark; then, suddenly changing their course, they approached the town, over a plain covered with water breast deep, at a point where they could not have been expected. A detachment was sent to make a demonstration against the fort, while the balance of the army invested the town, which surrendered without opposition. Some of the inhabitants had buried ammunition to keep it out of the hands of the British, and now produced it with offers of assistance. Chief Tobac volunteered to furnish a band of Indians to aid in the attack, but Clark declined his offer and accepted only a few volunteers from among the inhabitants. The friendly inhabitants had conveyed word to the American prisoners in the fort that Clark was coming, but had kept the information from the British, who did not dream of an attack until the firing by Lieutenant Bayley's detachment began, and then it was at first supposed to be the work of drunken Indians. In Butler's "Kentucky" an amusing anecdote is told about the beginning of the attack. It was well known that Captain Helm, who was a prisoner in the fort, had a great fondness for apple toddy, and it was thought that he would have some brewing on his hearth. When the location of his quarters had been ascertained, one of Clark's men asked and

obtained permission to shoot at the chimney and knock down some mud and sticks. The toddy was on the hearth, and the mud, falling into it, spoiled it. Helm, as soon as the firing began, jumped up and exclaimed that Clarke's men had arrived, and would take the fort, but added that the "d——d rascals" had no business to spoil his toddy. A heavy fire was kept up on both sides all night, but not much damage was done. Clark had placed his men in rifle pits within thirty yards of the walls, where the cannon could not be trained upon them, and, under cover of the darkness, had thrown up an earthwork across the road one hundred and twenty yards in front of the main gate. "In a few hours," says Clark, "I found my prize sure. Certain of taking every man that I could have wished for, being the whole of those that incited the Indians to war, all my past sufferings vanished; never was a man more happy." [41] Even Major Bowman enjoyed the situation in spite of his hunger. "The cannon played smartly," he says. "Not one of our men wounded. Men in the fort badly wounded. Fine sport for the sons of liberty." In the morning the firing became still hotter, and was kept up until nearly 9 o'clock. Clark had purposely allowed a scouting party to get back into the fort, in order not to have it out among the Indians, and to impress the British with his confidence; but learning that it had taken two prisoners, who were supposed to have letters for him, he decided to demand the surrender of the fort at once, to prevent the letters from being destroyed. He, therefore, sent a flag of truce with the following characteristic letter: [42]

Sir: In order to save yourself from the impending storm that now threatens you, I order you immediately to surrender yourself, with all your garrison, stores, etc., etc. For if I am obliged to storm, you may depend on such treatment as is due to a murderer. Beware of destroying stores of any kind, or

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[41] "Campaign," p. 70.

[42] "Memoirs."



any papers or letters that are in your possession, or hurting one house in town—for, by heavens! if you do, there shall be no mercy shown you.

[Signed]

G. R. CLARK.

Governor Hamilton immediately replied: "Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton begs leave to acquaint Col. Clark that he and his garrison are not disposed to be awed into any action unworthy of British subjects."

Major Bowman takes time to remark that while the negotiations were pending the men were served with a breakfast, "it being the only meal of victuals since the 18th inst." After that the Major appears to have had enough to eat, since he makes no more remarks about provisions. Governor Hamilton having refused to surrender, the firing was renewed with increased vigor, but the Americans were at a great advantage. Every one of them was an expert marksman to whom a man's head was a target too big ever to be missed. Captain Helm told the British soldiers to keep away from the loopholes or the Virginians would shoot their eyes out, and they soon found that he spoke the truth. The Americans, sheltered behind buildings and earthworks, completely surrounded the fort, and the instant a soldier ventured near a loop-hole, a dozen bullets sped toward him with deadly aim. Several of the soldiers fell with their eyes shot out, and the garrison became disheartened. They wished to surrender, because they feared that if they were captured they would be made to suffer for the Indian barbarities brought down upon the Americans in the past by their leader. As their spirits fell, those of the besiegers rose. They wanted to storm the fort, and it was with difficulty that they could be restrained from exposing themselves. Late in the afternoon Governor Hamilton sent a flag with a proposal for a truce of three days, and asked for a conference with Colonel Clark at the gate of the fort. Clark replied that he could not agree to any terms except immediate surrender at discretion, but would confer with him if he

desired at the village church, which stood about eighty yards from the fort. Hamilton met him there, accompanied by Major Hay, and Captain Helm, who was a prisoner at the fort. Clark was accompanied by Major Bowman. While they were conferring a thing happened which greatly increased the alarm of the soldiers at the fort. A party of Indians who had been sent to the falls of the Ohio for scalps was seen returning, and a company of Americans, commanded by Captain Williams, went out to meet them. The Indians, mistaking the men for friends, came on with demonstrations that denoted a successful raid. The Americans encouraged them until they had them in their power, then killed two on the spot, wounded three and took the rest prisoners. The captives were ordered put to death. Two who were found to be white men were liberated, but the others were tomahawked and their bodies thrown into the river. [43] This action threw the soldiers in the fort into terror. The negotiations at the church did not progress very satisfactorily. Hamilton proposed to surrender upon condition that he and his men be allowed to go to Pensacola on parole, but as Clark wanted to get the "Indian partisans," as he called them, into his hands, he declined to accept the conditions. A long conversation ensued which showed that there was distrust and hatred on both sides, and negotiations were finally broken off. Hamilton started to return to the fort, but after he had gone a few feet turned, and asked Clark to give him his reason for refusing to accept the conditions he had suggested. Clark replied that it was because he knew that the principal part of the Indian partisans of Detroit were with him in the fort, and he wanted to be at liberty to put them to death or treat them as he saw fit. Major Hay, who had been paying close attention, said,

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[43] Hamilton in his report, which has been printed in the Canadian Archives and in the Michigan Pioneer Collections, enlarges upon the barbarity of the act. Clark says he permitted it because he wanted to show the Indians that the British would not protect their friends, and it had the desired effect.

“Pray, sir, who is it that you call Indian partisans?” “Sir,” replied Clark, “I take Major Hay to be one of the principals.” “I never,” continues Clark, “saw a man in the moment of execution so struck as he appeared to be—pale and trembling, scarcely able to stand. Hamilton blushed—and, I observed, was much affected by his behavior. Major Bowman’s countenance sufficiently explained his disdain for the one and his sorrow for the other.” Some moments elapsed without a word being spoken on either side. Then Clark said he would reconsider the matter, and there should be no hostilities until the negotiations were ended. Before sunset the following terms of surrender had been agreed to: [44]

I—Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton engages to deliver up to Colonel Clark, Fort Sackville [45], as it is at present, with all the stores, etc.

II—The garrison are to deliver themselves as prisoners of war; and march out with their arms, accoutrements, etc.

III—The garrison to be delivered up at ten o’clock tomorrow.

IV—Three days time to be allowed the garrison to settle up their accounts with the inhabitants and traders of this place.

V—The officers of the garrison to be allowed their necessary baggage, etc.

Signed at Post St. Vincents, 24th Feb’y, 1779.

Agreed for the following reasons: the remoteness from succor, the state and quantity of provisions, etc.; unanimity of officers and men in its expediency; the honorable terms allowed; and lastly, the confidence in a generous enemy. [46]

(Signed)

HENRY HAMILTON,

Lieut.-Gov. and Superintendent.

The next morning at 10 o’clock the conditions of the capitulation were carried out. Clark had had one man wounded; seven had been wounded in the fort. Governor Hamilton had made a favorable impression upon Clark and his men. “I

[44] “Major Bowman’s Journal.”

[45] The English had renamed the fort, Fort Sackville.

[46] In his report Governor Hamilton excuses himself for paying Clark that compliment on the ground that he desired to flatter him in order to secure kind treatment for the wounded.

was happy," says Clark, "to find that he never deviated, while he stayed with us, from that dignity of conduct which became an officer in his position." Two days after the surrender, The Willing arrived, its men greatly chagrined that the capture should have been made without their assistance. They brought with them a government express with dispatches containing the welcome news that the battalion was to be completed, and supplemented by an additional one in the spring. On the day after the surrender a detachment of sixty men, under the command of Captain Helm, was sent up the river in three boats to intercept some boats coming with goods and provisions from Detroit. They traveled about one hundred and twenty miles, surprised the boats and captured them without firing a shot. Seven boats, loaded with goods worth £10,000, were secured, and Philip Dejean, grand judge of Detroit, was taken prisoner, with M. Adimar, the commissary, and thirty-eight others. Clark, who regarded Vincennes only as a stepping stone toward Detroit, put £800 worth of the goods aside for the use of the soldiers he proposed to take with him on the expedition, and divided the rest among the people. On March 7th, Captain Rogers and Captain Williams set out from Vincennes with Governor Hamilton, Major Hay, Captain Lamoth, Judge Dejean and twenty-two subordinate officers and privates to conduct them to the falls of the Ohio, and thence to Williamsburg. There the subordinates were soon released, but Hamilton and his principal associates were imprisoned in irons for some months, occasioning no end of diplomatic correspondence, until they were finally released on the recommendation of General Washington, who considered their imprisonment a violation of the conditions of the terms of the surrender. [47] Thus ended this most remarkable campaign which was fraught with so much importance to the

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[47] "Diplomatic Correspondence," vol. ii., p. 333. "Washington's Writings," vol. vii., pp. 240, 291, 317, 407. "Jefferson's Works," vol. i., pp. 226-237, 258, 267.



future of the young Republic. It not only added the force of conquest to the colonies' charter claims to the vast territory, but immediately put an end to the Indian hostilities and by exalting Clark in the opinion of the savages, made it possible for him to make treaties with them that were of the greatest benefit in the development of the conquered country.

#### CLARK'S SUBSEQUENT CAREER.

It would not be possible in this brief paper to follow in detail the subsequent career of this extraordinary man, nor would it be a pleasing task if it were possible. From this crowning point he would have to be followed step by step in a downward career until he sank at last in poverty and distress into the grave, unrewarded, and, comparatively speaking, unknown among the great benefactors of his country. A hasty survey will suffice. His cherished project of taking Detroit was destined never to be accomplished, but he set about preparing for the expedition with his usual energy. As soon as his business at Vincennes had been arranged he went to Kaskaskia, and there occupied himself settling the affairs of the Illinois country. While he was there the Indians presented him with a tract of land, two and one-half leagues square, on the west side of the falls of the Ohio, the site of Virginia's subsequent grant to Clark and his officers. In October, 1778, Virginia had established the County of Illinois and in December had appointed Colonel John Todd as county lieutenant, but until his arrival some months later, the government of the same rested in Clark's hands. When Todd arrived in the following May and a system of government was established, which had an important bearing on the subsequent boundary question, Clark turned with joy to his plans for the conquest of Detroit, only to be bitterly disappointed by the failure of Virginia to furnish him the men he needed. He had assurances of a large number of troops which he was to



meet at Vincennes, but when he arrived there in July he found only thirty, instead of three hundred men, from Kentucky, and no tidings of the men expected from Virginia. He sent out officers to get recruits and went himself for the same purpose to the falls of the Ohio, where Louisville had been established. There he received a letter from Jefferson, then governor of Virginia, stating that troops would be sent to him, and suggesting the building of a fort below the mouth of the Ohio River in order to strengthen the claim of the United States to the country, out of which suggestion grew the building of Fort Jefferson, by Clark, in the following year. About the time of the completion of Fort Jefferson, Colonel Byrd made his famous raid into Kentucky with a force of Indians and Canadians, retreating as quickly as he had come, because, it has been said, he was shocked at the barbarity of the Indians, but more likely because he feared that things would be made unpleasant for him if he happened to meet Colonel Clark and his warriors. Colonel Clark went to Harrodsburg, enlisted a thousand men, and retaliated by destroying the Indian towns on the Big and Little Miami, conducting his campaign with the same secrecy and dispatch that he had shown in the Vincennes campaign. Clark returned to the Ohio and spent his time revolving the project of reducing Detroit, which he could not put into execution because he had no men. Jefferson, who was deeply interested in the matter, urged Washington to furnish the necessary troops, and, in the latter part of December, Colonel Brodhead, in command of Fort Pitt, was ordered to furnish Clark with the men and supplies that he needed, Washington taking the precaution to instruct Colonel Brodhead to see that no Continental officer outranked Clark, in whom he had the greatest confidence, though he had never seen him. [48] Brodhead's instructions did not reach him until late in February. Meanwhile Benedict Arnold had

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[48] "Washington's Writings," vol. vii., pp. 343-345.

begun his invasion of Virginia, which was practically defenseless, and Clarke tendered his services to Baron Steuben. With two hundred and fifty men, he lay in ambush for the enemy and treated him to a taste of Western fighting that was not at all to his liking. He then returned to Fort Pitt and spent several months in a vain endeavor to get troops, Colonel Brodhead being unable to spare the men promised him. He had been made a brigadier-general, and at one time had hope of getting enough men to start upon the expedition, but a portion of his expected troops, under Colonel Lochry, were defeated by a party of Indians under the leadership of Joseph Brant. The end of the year found him at the falls of the Ohio bitterly lamenting the opportunity that was gone. "Detroit lost for a few hundred men," he said in his disappointment, and from the moment that the enterprise was abandoned his star declined. At this point, at the early age of twenty-nine, he ceased to be an important factor in Western affairs. The following summer he led a successful but not very brilliant expedition against the Indians on the Miami. On July 2, 1783, he was dismissed from the service of the State of Virginia with a letter of thanks from the governor. The financial distress of the state was given as the reason for his discharge, but chafing under the disappointments he had met, and the wrongs he had suffered, he had taken to drink and was fast becoming a wreck. Three years later he undertook to lead an army of one thousand Kentucky volunteers against the Indians, but he was a changed man and the expedition failed. When the news of the failure reached Louisville, a political enemy exclaimed, "The sun of General Clark's military glory has set forever!" and the prediction was only too true. In the thirty-two years of his subsequent life he appeared in Western affairs only once, and that in an unfortunate light. It was at the time of Genet's proposed expedition against the Spanish possessions on the Mississippi. Clark

accepted a commission from the French minister, and undertook to raise a force of Kentucky volunteers. Before the project could be carried out, Genet was recalled and Clark's commission was annulled. He never appeared in public life again. He never married. In his declining years he suffered from ill health. Rheumatic troubles, brought on no doubt by the exposure he endured in his younger years, terminated in paralysis and caused him the loss of one limb. Poor and neglected, he lived in the little home near the falls of the Ohio, which was all that he ever received from this great government in return for his services, until the year 1814. Then he removed to the home of his sister, Mrs. William Croghan, at Locust Grove, where he died in February, 1818.

Clark had all the qualifications of a great leader. In appearance he was tall and commanding, and in his demeanor there was a dignity that compelled respect. There was no danger that he feared to face, no hardship that he could not endure. He was quick to act and as crafty as an Indian in action. With the eye of a military genius, he saw where and how he could get the enemy at a disadvantage, and he struck his blows with a force and suddenness that were paralyzing. He commanded not only the respect, but the love, of his men, from whom he always received a willing obedience. Had he been supported by the state, there is not much doubt that he would have taken Detroit, gone from Detroit to Niagara, from Niagara to Montreal, from Montreal to Quebec, and changed the map of North America. "He was a great man," says Dunn in his "History of Indiana." "Of all those who preceded or followed him, La Salle is the only one who can be compared to him in the wonderful combination of genius, activity and courage that lifted him above his fellows." Neglect and disappointment were the direct cause of his downfall. Chafing under bitter chagrin at the failure of his cherished Detroit expedition, worried by lawsuits over goods taken in

the Vincennes campaign, for which the government refused to pay, mortified because his great ability was not recognized by a commission in the Continental army, oppressed by poverty and harassed by political enemies, he sought relief in drink and destroyed himself. There is no doubt that he felt the neglect of his country keenly. It is related of him that when late in life Virginia presented him with a sword, he exclaimed: "When Virginia needed a sword, I gave her one. She sends me now a toy. I want bread!"—thrust the sword into the ground and broke it with his crutch, though his latest biographer discredits the story. [49] In 1799 Judge Burnet, induced by the veneration he felt for his military talents and services, made a journey of some miles to visit Clark. "His health," he says, "was much impaired, but his majestic person, strong features, and dignified deportment, gave evidence of an intelligent, resolute mind. He had the appearance of a man born to command, and fitted by nature for his destiny. There was a gravity and solemnity in his demeanor, resembling that which so eminently distinguished 'the venerated Father of his Country.' A person familiar with the lives and character of the military veterans of Rome, in the days of her greatest power, might readily have selected this remarkable man as a specimen of the model he had formed of them in his own mind; but he was rapidly falling a victim to his extreme sensibility, and to the ingratitude of his native state, under whose banner he had fought bravely and with great success. The time will certainly come when the enlightened and magnanimous citizens of Louisville will remember the debt of gratitude they owe the memory of that distinguished man. He was the leader of the pioneers who made the first lodgment on the site now covered by their rich and splendid city. He was its protector during the years of its infancy, and in the period of its greatest danger. Yet the traveler who has read

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[49] English's "Conquest of the Northwest," vol. ii., pp. 88-93.

of his achievements—admired his character—and visited the theater of his brilliant deeds, discovers nothing indicating the place where his remains are deposited, and where he can go and pay tribute of respect to the memory of the departed and gallant hero.” The prediction remains unfulfilled. Indianapolis has erected a statue in his honor, but Louisville has not followed her example. For half a century his remains lay in the grave at Locust Grove and then were removed to Cave Hill cemetery in the suburb of Louisville, where they lie with nothing more than a simple headstone to mark their resting place.

DAN B. STARKEY.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, January 12th, 1897.









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Correspondence may be addressed,

GARDNER P. STICKNEY, Secretary,  
427 Bradford Street, MILWAUKEE, WIS.





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